

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, PN

SUBJECT: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: TORRIJOS PRESS CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF TORRIJOS' AUGUST 3 INTERVIEW WITH NEWSMEN ON CONTADORA UNEVEN. TWO PAPERS REPORTED HIM AS FORESEEING CANAL TREATY WITHIN A FEW MONTHS, A THIRD DID NOT. LATTER INDICATED TORRIJOS WILL VISIT CUBA THIS YEAR. ALL NOTED THE GENERAL'S OPTIMISM OVER "LATEST DEVELOPMENTS" WHICH EMBASSY BELIEVES MAY REFER TO WHAT OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ORFILA RELATED TO TORRIJOS ON ROUTE TO SANTA MARTA SUMMIT CONFERENCE JULY 27. END SUMMARY.

1. GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS WAS INTERVIEWED BY FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC NEWSMEN--IN PANAMA TO COVER LAST WEEK'S SELA CONFERENCE-- ON CONTADORA ISLAND, AUGUST 3. WHAT TORRIJOS ACTUALLY SAID IN HIS INTERVIEW IS SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY. PRESS CONVERAGE RESULTED IN THREE MARKEDLY DIFFERENT NEWS STORIES APPEARING HERE ON AUGUST 4.

2. MORNING ESTRELLA DE PANAMA, PRINTING WHAT IT CALIMED TO BE "EXCLUSIVE" INTERVIEW FIRST PUBLISHED IN MEXICO CITY'S
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EL SOL DE MEXCIO, AND AFTERNOON PANAMA AMERICAN HEADLINES

BLAZONED: "TREATY COULD COME WITHIN MONTHS, SAID TORRIJOS." BASIS GIVEN FOR THIS PREDICTION, ACCORDING TO ARTICLES WAS "BECAUSE THE U.S. SAID THERE WOULD BE A TREATY THIS YEAR". IN CONTRAST THE MORNING CRITICA, IN LESS PROMINENT POSITION, OPTED FOR "NEUTRALITY WILL DEFEND THE CANAL", AND DID NOT EVEN CARRY ABOVE QUOTES. CRITICA NEVERTHELESS, WAS SOLE PAPER TO REPORT THAT TORRIJOS MAY VISIT CUBA THIS YEAR.

3. REPORTAGE WAS REASONABLY SIMILAR ON OTHER POINTS, TO WIT: BEST DEFENSE OF CANAL IS ITS NEUTRALITY AND PANAMANIAN PEOPLE'S AFFECTION TOWARDS IT, AND THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE-- A TREATY REFLECTIVE OF PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS--IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TIME SPAN NEEDED TO CONCLUDE IT. CONCERNING THE LATTER TORRIJOS WAS QUOTED: "A TREATY COULD HAVE BEEN CONCLUDED RECENTLY. IF THIS HAD BEEN, DONE, THE PANAMANIAN WOULD HAVE CONDEMNED ME IN THE SAME PROPORTIONS THAT THE U.S. WOULD HAVE APPLAUDED ME." QUESTIONED WHETHER FAILURE IN NEGOTIATIONS WOULD INVITE VIOLENCE IN PANAMA, TORRIJOS REPLIED HE HOPED NEITHER WOULD OCCUR. ONE SOMEWHAT CRYPTIC STATEMENT CARRIED BY ALL THREE PAPERS HAS TORRIJOS ADD, AFTER NOTING THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN STAGNATED FOR THE LAST FOUR MONTHS, THAT "THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS INDICATE WE ARE NOW CLOSE TO A SOLUTION". LATEST DEVELOPMENTS WERE NOT IDENTIFIED FURTHER.

4. COMMENT: WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ASSERTION THAT TREATY COULD COME WITHIN A FEW MONTHS, AND ENIGMATIC REFERENCE TO UNSPECIFIED "LATEST DEVELOPMENTS," TORRIJOS TORRIJOS SAID LITTLE THAT HE HAS NOT STATED ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS. TORRIJOS' OPTIMISTIC COMMENTS ON POSSIBLE TREATY WITHIN A FEW MONTHS MAY DERIVE FROM SOMETHING OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ORFILA REPORTEDLY TOLD HIM WHEN THE TWO RECENTLY TRAVELED TOGETHER TO SANTA MARTA COLOMBIA. EMBOFF WAS INFORMED BY OFFICIAL CLOSE TO THE GENERAL THAT ORFILA TOLD TORRIJOS THAT LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN WASHINGTON INDICATED TORRIJOS MIGHT NOT HAVE TO WAIT AS LONG AS HE HAD EXPECTED FOR THE U.S. TO AGREE TO A NEW TREATY. EMBASSY SUSPECTS THAT WIDE DIVERSITY OF PRESS COVERAGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON TORRIJOS' CONTADORA INTERVIEW WAS DUE TO FACT THAT TORRIJOS AND REPORTERS CONVERSED WHILE STROLLING ON THE BEACH AND SOME NEWSMEN HAD DIFFICULTIES IN PICKING UP ALL HIS WORDS.
JORDEN

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